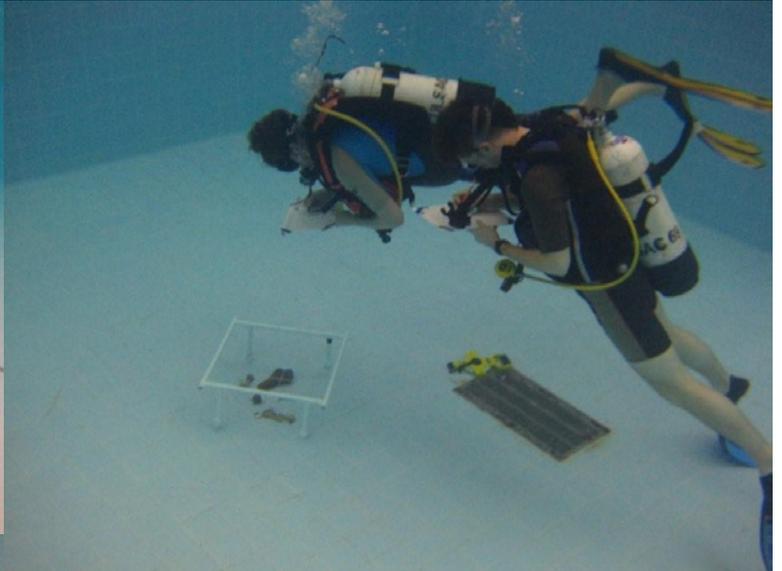




ULSAC

Newsletter

NAS Course



Summer 2009

Inside this month's newsletter you can read about some of the things that ULSAC got up to last Summer: from the Nautical Archaeology Society Introduction Course, to the Underwater (Pool) Olympics and of course several dive trips. Let's hope that this year's even better!



Captain 'Borat' Spunk's Special p.3

You can look forward to Captain Spunk's latest poem: Only Fools and Divers and read Captain Spunk's account of the Swanage trip which included diving the Kyarra and Aeolian Skye.



COVER STORY: Nautical Archaeology Society Introduction Course p.4

Last year Craig arranged for the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) to come down to the pool and present an introductory course on wrecks and underwater surveying techniques.

xxxxx tells us how it went.

You can see some photos of the course on the cover of this issue.



The Pool Olympics 2009 p.4

This annual ULSAC event is organised thanks to the social secs. Fionn shares with us his and Siobhan's experiences of organising the fab event which in 2009 included: a swimming relay, butterfly, "emergency pyjama" race, a mask clearing relay, egg and spoon race, a three-legged swim, and the longest underwater swim (perhaps not Tony's favourite event....)



Next issues: ET and the French Muppet Show Specials

Stay tuned for Chris and Tony's accounts of the South of France trip.

For those that were on this year's ET please email me any funny stories or photos that you want to share before the end of the month!

Captain Spunk's corner



Those early starts...

...Swanage Expedition: Kyarra and Aelonia Skye

Waking up before 6am is a bitch. Seriously, it sucks. A lot of things suck. This sucks more. 7am is a pain in the arse, but it's like a fucking aromatherapy massage compared to 6am. And that's during the week. Now try it on a weekend. After the world was made in 6 days, did its Maker wake up at 6am on the 7th day? No, He bloody well didn't. Do you know why? 'Cos He wasn't going diving.

In summary, there exists in the world only one good reason to get up before 6am: scuba diving. Good scuba diving. I wouldn't want to wake up at 6am to dive Bovi Harbour. The Aeolian Sky and the Kyarra are two very excellent reasons to get up at 6am. Even on the 7th day.

Now, I hadn't dived the Aeolian Sky since my 25m depth progression back in '06, and I remembered very little about it. That was my first year of UK diving, and every wreck pretty much looked the same to me, particularly in hind-sight. My lasting memory of the Sky was the sheer sides of a hull. So I was very keen to re-discover it.

Now here is a tip. Local knowledge is great. Really, it rocks. Mostly. I'd say, maybe 99% of the time. The remaining 1% of the time, you end up sitting on a RIB for 90 minutes waiting for slack-water as an inexorable fog creeps around you. As many of you will know, I don't like fog. Fog and I, we have a kind of "agree to disagree" arrangement. So what do you do in fog? Well, in really thick fog, you go home. In the kind of fog that was teasing us at the time, you can dive, but you make damn sure you come back up the shotline by clipping a distance line to its base and swimming off from that, making sure you leave yourself plenty of time to make it back, ascend and complete any stops you may have planned. This seriously limits your exploration of the wreck, but it's a lot better than not diving it at all, which was the alternative.

I discovered a very different Aeolian Sky to the smooth side of a hull I remembered. Some lovely wreckage, cool shapes and forms created by the gradual breaking up of the structure, some cavities to swim into and see a conger eel in, plenty of fish. And lots more to see than we could, given our limitations. A great shame, but still a thoroughly enjoyable dive.

Now the next day, after another ungodly pre-6am awakening, brought finer weather, with, importantly, no fog. So we were free from the shackles of the distance line to explore the day's main wreck: the Kyarra.

Now, I ask you, what is the perfect dive? Perhaps, it comes close to the following. You hit the water in damn-near slack current and wearing just the right amount of insulation to deal with the ambient temperature. You come down the shotline, which is right on the wreck, adjust your buoyancy, and spend a little time bimbbling near the sea-bed by the side of the hull, admiring the great big wrasse that are swimming around. Moving with next to no effort, you return to the top of the wreck and gently swim towards the bow, inspecting the nooks in crannies in the wreckage, taking the occasional swim-through, passing by a conger and a lobster on the way. You reach the bow, which is lying on its side, giving you the opportunity to peer underneath its rising curves at the fish hiding in the shadows. You then spend a little time swimming with various schools of fish, seeing whether you can blend seamlessly among them like a very skilful chameleon. In the end, I think my dive timer gave me away.

In the afternoon, we dived the Fleur de Lys. Some people saw a skate. Good for them. I didn't.

Seriously, the Kyarra rocks. It is a wreck worth getting up a 6am for.

Only Fools and Divers

Stick a pony on my jacket
 I'll fetch the twin-sets from the van,
 'cos if you want the deepest
 and you don't ask questions
 then brother, I'm your man
 But when we'll go diving is a mystery,
 I'll check the forecast of the weather and the tides of the sea,
 but here's the one that's driving me beserk,
 why can't I just dive and never work,
 lalalalala, lalalalala

Nautical Archaeology Society Introduction Course

March 2009 - Jeremy Davey

Following a lot of interest from members of the club to get involved with learning more about wrecks and underwater surveying techniques, Craig organised for representatives of the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) to come and present this introductory course to ULSAC.

We started off with a great introduction to the theory side of underwater archaeology where we learnt about the differences in definition on nautical and maritime archaeology, making us question our understanding of the field. For example, does a plane surveyed underwater constitute nautical archaeology?

A distinct lack of jokes was made about the 'dating' lecture we had but I think we all hoped to find out how to hook up with mermaids! In fact we were counting tree rings and flipping coins.

One of the coolest bits of the course was getting to handle parts from a wreck of the HMS Invincible, a French 74 gun ship that was captured by the British Navy in the middle of the 18th century, later becoming the model for Nelson's flagship the HMS Victory and many other navy vessels.

Following a lecture covering the rules and regulations (which Tony exhibited an amazing knowledge of!) and lunch, we moved onto the practical side of the day. Going in with an attitude of 'Surely it's just reading off a load of numbers from a tape measure' I was shocked at how difficult it actually was... and that was above water! When we jumped in the pool it all became a lot harder especially when you couldn't talk to each other (something I know I like to do lots!).

This was a really cool introduction to the equipment and techniques and playing with quadrants again took me back to Key Stage 3 Geography field trips. The real advantage of being able to hover above the scene is that you can get a really accurate picture of the site you are surveying although, some of our drawing skills could do with a bit of improvement.

With plenty more courses and projects for us to get on I think we all came out very inspired. Next step for ULSAC is surely to get surveying our adopted wreck the Betsy Anna so keep your eyes peeled for the trip on the 3rd August and get on board!

Many thanks to Craig for bringing the day altogether and to the NAS folks for such a great course.

Pool Olympics, the season's final test!

Fionn shares with us the trials of organising the pool olympics

This epic event had been on the calendar for ages, and to the dismay of the new social secs. showed quite a lot of work in a short period of time. We had to make this an amazing event for the turnout was bound to be amazing, so in true ULSAC style Siobhan C and I started preparing for it four days before D-day. A short trip to walk around Camden for the prizes and a thought of exactly what it was we needed to do on the day itself. At this point I must admit that with exams so nearby I left most of the planning up to Siobhan C, and she came up with some amazing ideas (some ideas were contributed from club members, which was greatly appreciated!!!!). So there it was, Friday the 5th of June...D-day.

"Where are you?" I panicked as Siobhan C arrived three minutes late, "There are already some people here!". Indeed there were and true to word, between 6.00 and 6.45 ALMOST everyone showed up. Ample opportunity then to get the kit set-up, the pyjamas wet and the stopwatches set. Or so I thought....Dave? What's the lock combination? Dave, it doesn't seem to be working....Dave, you're a legend, thanks! Kit set-up, teams made and everything made ready in the nick of time. After a very short briefing by Martin and a quick explanation the first event was underway: the swimming relay. "On your marks, get set, go!"

In quick succession, much to the relief of both Siobhan C and myself, we get the swimming relay, butterfly, "emergency pyjama" race, the mask clearing relay, egg and spoon race, the three-legged swim, the longest underwater swim (which I think most will agree will haunt Pony Tony for a while) and spoons! After a shower, kit-down and change it was off to the pub! The private room upstairs in The Hope was now packed with ULSAC people and after a quick dinner (courtesy of Tesco's and the local pizza place) it was time for the prize giving.

First off were the individual prizes where the amazing cookie medals came into play. Besides being gorgeous they also tasted amazing and in no time all medals had disappeared! Hats off to team Pentafuck for winning the overall competition and I sincerely hope that the plaque will hold a special place, wherever it went! I think I can speak for all of us there saying it was an amazing event and that is brilliant fun!